

BDAC Ecosystem Restoration Work Group
Meeting Summary
April 22, 1996

The BDAC Ecosystem Restoration Work Group held its first meeting on April 22, 1996 at the Resources Building in Sacramento. BDAC members of the Work Group present were: Mary Selkirk (Chair), Bob Raab, Tib Belza, Stuart Pyle, and Lee Lehman. Invited participants included: Nat Bingham (PCFFA), Charles Hanson (SWC), Cindy Darling (BR), Tom Zuckerman (Central Delta Water Agency), Bruce Herbold (EPA), Jeff Jaraczski (NCWA), Pete Rhoads (MWD), Frank Wernette (DFG), Kate Hansel (DWR), and Gary Bobker (Bay Institute). Thirteen individuals representing general public and stakeholders also attended. CALFED staff present included: Lester Snow, Dick Daniel, Rick Soehren, Sharon Gross, and Mary Scoonover. Members of the CALFED consultant team present were: Dave Fullerton (NHI), Tom Cannon (JSA), Jordan Lang (JSA), and Ron Ott (CH2MHILL).

Mary Selkirk provided an overview of the purpose of the Work Group and indicated the objectives as follows:

- Provide insight on an appropriate vision for the Ecosystem Restoration component of the CALFED Bay-Delta Program;
- Discuss development of reference levels of a healthy system;
- Review an adaptive management approach;
- Provide insight into development of institutional measures and assurances needed; and
- Identify areas of agreement/disagreement for an ecosystem restoration strategy.

Work Group members and participants recognized this as an important activity and major challenge. There is significant concern about our timeline for answering questions and what our needs are for the process.

Lester Snow provided an overview of the types of comments that we have been hearing during the scoping meetings. There is no general disagreement on our focus on ecosystem restoration and most individuals indicated a need to improve the ecosystem and not simply mitigate for actions. There was also strong support for the core and essential actions, however, there is concern about cost and the level of detail that has been presented thus far. Also expressed is need to understand the ecosystem strategy and not just the actions.

Rick Soehren outlined the steps that CALFED believes are necessary leading to a vision. These steps include identifying limiting factors, developing problem statements, defining objectives, developing actions, and constructing alternatives.

The key points of the CALFED strategy for ecosystem restoration is to define limiting factors (problems), use natural processes to facilitate ecosystem functions, increase resilience, provide multiple benefits with actions, measure results of actions, and compensate for unavoidable side effects.

Dick Daniel led a discussion on using a limiting factors approach for ecosystem restoration. Discussion focussed on the strengths and weaknesses of the limiting factor approach and the functional approach as well as the applicability of using both approaches. There was also discussion about the use of historical data/conditions/functions in setting program targets.

Dick Daniel made a presentation on channel islands and erosion of habitat features in Delta channels. Discussion with Work Group members focussed on the benefits of channel islands and other shallow water habitat in the Bay-Delta system.

Comments from the public included the following:

- Richard Harter (Farmer from Sutter County) -- Industrialization of farming in Central Valley after WWII caused many problems including toxic chemicals and habitat destruction. Many farmers are now voluntarily engaged in restoration of the habitat that they have diminished. They are participating and willing to do more. The way water rights are set up encourage waste; farmers could save a lot of water. Mr. Harter indicated that there is a very good market niche for organic farmers.
- Tim Ford (Turlock and Modesto Irrigation District) The San Joaquin irrigation districts have forged ahead to restore tributaries, spawning habitat, and flows for salmon. Process-oriented approach includes restoration and assessment of functions, ecosystem approach, and how to improve functions. Looking at effects of gravel mining, gold mining, and loss of riparian habitat from land use practices. Also looking at main San Joaquin River. There is no overall direction: each tributary and mainstem is working independently.

At the next meeting, the Work Group will discuss healthy reference conditions; and adaptive management. Several individuals noted that it was important to get resolution before CALFED moves out of Phase I, recognizing that the Work Group would continue well into Phase II.